

# Best Practices

## Keeping a Crew Focused

**M**aintaining a safe working environment aboard USS *Ramage* (DDG-61) is a priority that starts at the top. The CO constantly stresses that no evolution is routine. To keep the crew focused, he and his cadre of leaders consider ORM for each shipboard event.

During calendar year 2004, which included a four-month deployment to Fifth and Sixth Fleets, the *Ramage* leadership held five safety stand-downs to maximize readiness, minimize risk, and ensure mission accomplishment. Among the topics discussed were general, electrical and traffic safety, as well as navigation and watchstanding practices.

Early in the deployment, the leadership noticed that some watchstanders were becoming complacent in carrying out their more routine tasks. Interaction with other ships was minimal, so watches had a tendency to become tedious. With the long deployment ahead, the leadership decided to provide a refresher for all hands on watchstanding practices. Both officer and enlisted personnel from all control stations (bridge, CIC and CCS) participated.

Each group generated lists of good watchstanding habits, such as turnover procedures and pre-watch routine. Many Sailors provided new ideas and shared their “secrets” to standing an effective watch. Scenarios also were given to each group to promote the proper evaluation of ORM (providing factors that forced the balance of risk versus benefit). The results of this stand-down were evident throughout the deployment, as reflected in increased vigilance—watchstanders paid more attention to details.

Besides holding the required traffic-safety stand-down upon returning from deployment, the *Ramage* leadership held one earlier in the year after identifying a pattern of traffic-safety issues. Several crew members had incidents involving bad-driving habits and driving while fatigued (e.g., making long trips late at night while returning from weekend liberty). Concerned that this trend

would lead to serious injury or loss of life, leaders acted before the problem got out of control. They used the five steps of ORM to develop a plan:

**Identify the hazard.** Many junior Sailors were receiving tickets for moving traffic violations, even though traffic-safety training was being held regularly.

**Assess hazards.** Because of the potential severity of increased traffic incidents, the leadership decided to hold a one-day stand-down focused solely on traffic safety.

**Make risk decisions.** The ship’s leadership developed risk-control options, including guidelines for supervisors to use in counseling individuals who embarked on weekend trips. The leadership also increased the amount of traffic-safety training.

**Implement controls.** The leadership implemented a series of administrative controls:

- The Virginia State Police provided training at a driver-safety stand-down.
- Traffic-safety training was added to the schedule for the ship’s “division in the spotlight” program, reinforcing continuous training practices.
- Driver-safety training was separated from the general safety training at command indoctrination, a move designed to emphasize the importance of traffic safety.
- The ship’s safety committee developed a command policy that detailed guidelines to ensure Sailors are counseled before going out of town on leave or liberty. A form attached to the leave or liberty chit outlines procedures for resolving problems while on the road. The form also lists phone numbers for the chain of command to be used in the event of an emergency. Sailors are reminded that their safety comes first and that driving while fatigued late at night isn’t worth the risk.

**Supervise.** The *Ramage* leadership will continue to assess traffic safety and adjust their program to ensure the crew’s safety. ■

Navy photo by PHC Kevin Farmer